## CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A composition comprising a first compound including immobilized metal atoms and/or ions capable of binding compounds containing a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine group and a second compound containing a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine group bound to a portion of the metal atoms and/or ions.

2. The composition of claim 1, wherein the second compound is selected from the group of RNA, single stranded DNA, and other molecules having a non-shielded purine and/or pyrimidine moiety or group.

3. An immobilized metal affinity chromatography (IMAC) column comprising a packing including immobilized metal atoms and/or ions capable of binding compounds containing a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety or group and a compound containing a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety or group bound to a portion of the metal atoms and/or ions.

4. A substrate comprising a plurality of ligands bonded thereto, each ligand immobilizing a metal atom and/or ion capable of binding compounds containing a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety or group, and a compound containing a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety or group bound to a portion of the metal atoms and/or ions.

5. The substrate of claim 4, wherein the second compound is selected from the group of RNA, single stranded DNA, and other molecules having a non-shielded purine and/or pyrimidine moiety or group.

6. An apparatus comprising a sample input unit, a separation unit, a detector unit and an analyzer unit.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the separation unit is a zone comprising an IMAC matrix including metal atoms, metal ions or mixtures thereof capable of binding compound having a non-shielded purine moiety, pyrimidine moiety or mixture thereof.

8. An apparatus comprising a substrate having an IMAC ligand coated thereon, bonded thereto, deposited thereon or deposited therein, where the substrate is adapted to remove contaminating compounds including a non-shielded purine moiety, pyrimidine moiety, or mixture thereof from target compounds including a shielded purine moiety, pyrimidine moiety, or mixture thereof.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the substrate is selected from the group consisting of a porous stirrer, a filter, a membrane, an interior wall of a vessel, or mixtures thereof.

10. A method for separating compounds comprising the step of:

contacting a solution comprising compounds including a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety and compounds including a shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety with a solid composition including immobilized metal atoms and/or ions capable of binding compounds containing a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety to form a supernatant liquid having a reduced amount of compounds including a non-shielded purine or pyrimidine moiety.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of:

separating the supernatant liquid from the solid composition.

12. A method for separating compounds comprising the steps of:

passing a solution comprising a mixture of compounds including a non-shielded purine moiety, a non-shielded pyrimidine moiety or mixture thereof through a column including an IMAC ligand, where the ligand is capable of differentially binding the

compounds; and

collecting purified samples of each compound.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of:

detecting each compound in an effluent from the column as a function of time from at least one detectable property associated with each compound; and

determining the identity of each compound from the detected properties.

14. A method for purifying food stuffs containing purine and/or pyrimidine moieties comprising the steps of:

forming a crude food stuff comprising cellular constituents including digestable proteins and nucleic acid contaminants including a non-shielded purine moiety, a non-shielded pyrimidine moiety or mixture thereof;

contacting the food stuff with substrate comprising an IMAC ligand, where the substrate binds the nucleic acid contaminants; and

removing the substrate comprising the IMAC ligand having bound thereto the nucleic acid contaminants to form a purified food stuff.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of

treating the crude food stuff with a DNAse, endo or exo nuclease or other nucleic acid digestion enzyme or agent prior to the contacting step.

16. A method for purifying a crude compound containing a non-shielded purine and/or pyrimidine moiety comprising the steps of:

forming a crude mixture comprising a target compound and contaminants;

contacting the crude mixture with an agent including an IMAC ligand capable of binding to the target compound to form an IMAC ligand complex;

separating the complex from the contaminants; and

recovering the compound from the complex.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the compound is an AIDs drugs selected from the group consisting of AZT or DDI, co-enzyme A, or mixtures thereof.

18. An assay comprising the steps of:

contacting a microplate substrate comprising wells coated with a composition comprising a IMAC-oligonucleotide complex including an IMAC ligand and a single stranded oligonucleotide having a first molecular and/or atomic tag bound to the IMAC ligand; and

contacting a nucleic acid sequence including a second molecular and/or atomic tag with the IMAC-oligonucleotide complex; and

measuring a change in fluorescence when the nucleic acid sequence includes a complimentary subsequence to oligonucleotide due to an interaction between the first and second molecular and/or atomic tags.

19. The assay of claim 18, wherein the first tag is a fluorophore and the second tag is a quencher for the fluorophore.

20. An assay comprising the steps of contacting a substrate comprising a surface coated with a composition comprising an IMAC ligand and a first fluorophore with an oligonucleotide including a second fluorophore and measuring an effective Stoke shift such that a large effective Stoke shift signifies oligonucleotide binding to the coated substrate and a normal effective Stoke shift signifies no oligonucleotide binding to the coated substrate.